



CORE STABILITY TRAINING FOR THE CYCLIST? YOU BET!

As the winter drags on, those of us who prefer two wheels to two planks start thinking again of bicycling outside. All those hours on the trainer can drain the motivation of even the most ardent cyclist. So why not jump off the bike and prepare yourself for that first group ride or race by working on core strength?

At first, core stability training for cycling may seem unnecessary. The powerhouses of cycling lie in the hip extensors (the gluteus maximus). Add in some efficiency training, enough hours in the saddle to improve the cardiovascular system, and some perseverance and you might feel fully prepared.

Unfortunately this is not the case! Those powerhouses in your hips pull directly on the center of your body: the spine and core. In fact, the core is your foundation of movement and force while riding a bike. Research shows that core stabilization training can improve your trunk endurance, increasing the time you can spend bent over the handlebars.

Need even more reasons to start working on planks and crunches? Consider the research that suggests your bike fit could be derailed by poor core stability. When elite cyclists were put through a routine that fatigued the core, researchers found that there was a significant increase in knee motion right to left. All the time and money spent achieving the perfect fit is negated as the core tires out – leading to potential ankle, knee, and hip pain.

Core stability training can directly benefit your cycling performance. However, training wisely could make the difference between beating your rival and wasting your time. Below are some exercises that can start you on the path to a stronger core and increased endurance. As always, start every new training routine slowly, and consult a medical professional if you experience any pain when performing these activities.

Oblique Abdominal Side Plank

Lie on side on feet and elbow. Lift trunk. Slowly lower trunk for 3-5 seconds. Perform 2-3 sets of 12 reps.

Prop on Forearms

Prop on ball with elbows under shoulders. Keep back straight. Roll ball forward and backward. Perform 2-3 sets of 10 reps each with a 10 sec rest after each set.

Knee Extension from Bridging

From sitting position on ball, walk out to bridge position as shown. Straighten knee while keeping balance. Perform 2-3 sets of 12 reps each.

Leg Curl from 4"-6" Bridge

With heels resting on ball and hips lifted 4"-6" from floor, roll ball toward you by bending knees. Return to start. Perform 2-3 sets of 12 reps each.

Half Boat Pose

Lie on back with hands clasped behind head. Exhale and lift legs to 45°, rounding up head and shoulders. Hold for 15 seconds. Perform 1 set of 8-10 reps.

If you have any questions, have pain which is preventing you from enjoying cycling, or are interested in more personal and specific programs, you can find your local Therapeutic Associates Physical Therapist at:

<http://www.therapeuticassociates.com/Locations>

1. Effect of core stabilization training on the lower back endurance in recreationally active individuals. Anoop Aggarwal, Suraj Kumar, and Dharmendar Kumar, J. Musculoskelet. Res. 13, 167 (2010).
2. Relationship between cycling mechanics and core stability. Abt JP, Smoliga JM, Brick MJ, Jolly JT, Lephart SM, Fu FH. J Strength Cond Res. 2007 Nov;21(4):1300-4.

Brian Weiderman PT, DPT, OCS, Director, TAI Physical Therapy - Meridian